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NOT SO NORMATIVE?

The European Commission and the ever-changing Arctic region.

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Abstract

Climate change has drastically changed the prospects of obtaining resources in the Arctic that were long deemed unobtainable due to the harsh climate in the region. The European Union has gradually evolved its Arctic policy in recent years due to these severe alterations, in which the European Commission has been the most active in pursuing that policy. This thesis analysed the gradual change in perception that the European Commission had on Arctic governance, security and commercial interests. In order to assess this change in perception, the theories of Liberalism and Realism were operationalised together with a dimensional model type analysis. The material that was analysed in this thesis were the three main European Arctic policy documents released in 2008, 2012 and 2016. The contents of the policies were analysed according to the model types, Realism and Liberalism, and subsequently placed on a dimensional scale in order to determine the gradual change. The results indicate that there has been a gradual change in perception of Arctic security and commercial interests, but not when it concerns regional governance. The European Commission, according to its Arctic policy, perceives Arctic affairs both according to realism and liberalism depending on policy area as well as year of publication.

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1. Introduction

Initially, a major reason for the increased broad EU interest in Arctic affairs was the result of an international discourse on the geopolitical implications of climate change in the region, which has increased from 2007 and onwards. Global climate change has placed the Arctic region¹ at the centre of geopolitics as the melting ice sheet transforms the Arctic from a region with predominantly scientific interest, to one with commercial, national security and environmental concerns. This has subsequently led to severe effects on the international political system. Longer ice-free periods will have profound commercial implications for the Arctic as it is estimated that 90 billion barrels of oil and 44 billion barrels of natural gas are located in the region. Furthermore, the northern sea route would shorten maritime transport between Asia and Europe by 40%, compared to the existing routes through the Suez and Panama canals.²

Endorsed by the European Commission, concerns over the implications of climate change led to the first Arctic policy developed by the European Union in 2008. In turn, the European Commission has expanded the foreign policy of the European Union by working as a “supranational entrepreneur”, and it has been vital in developing the Arctic Policy of the European Union.³ Furthermore, the contents of the policy have over the years switched course from concerns over the geopolitical implications of climate change, to more softer issues in order to gain legitimacy in the region.⁴ Additionally, when the EU acts as an Arctic actor, it is grounded on values such as liberty and peace, which in turn forms the political structure known as “Normative Power Europe”. This implies that the EU wants to act as a “force for good”, rather than adhering to realistic interests in the Arctic.⁵ However, the main reason for increased EU interest in the Arctic is arguably due to economic factors, as well as environmental and political ones. These interests constitute the will to protect the rights of indigenous peoples in

¹ See Appendix 1.

² Ebinger, K., Charles & Zambetakis, Evie., (2009) “The Geopolitics of Arctic melt” *International Affairs*, Vol 85(6) p. 1215-1216

³ Offerdal, Kristine (2011) “The EU in the Arctic: In pursuit of legitimacy and influence.” *International Journal*, Vol 66(4), p. 864

⁴ Offerdal (2011) p. 862

⁵ Østhagen (2013) p. 73

the region, as well as safeguarding the flow and existence of Arctic natural resources such as fish, oil and natural gas of which the EU is highly dependent on.⁶

The stability of the Arctic region relies on two main factors. The policies of the respective Arctic nations and their ability to solve any disputes with each other through regional and international institutions such as the Arctic council and the United Nations, alongside international law. Moreover, the stability of the region is also mainly connected to the environment, which in turn is connected with geopolitical stability.⁷ The arctic melt will not lead to a “race for the Arctic” as long as the technological capabilities that are necessary for harnessing resources confined in the region are lacking. However, when existent, it could lead to severe economic, military, governmental and environmental challenges for the region. As such, there is no reason to believe that the region will function alongside international law and existing cooperative institutions, and the same can be said about the European union’s multilateral approach.⁸

On the 20th of July 2020, the European Commission and the External Action Service issued a press release concerning an invitation for a public consultation on the future structure of EU Arctic Policy. In which high representative Joseph Borrell stated:

The Arctic is a rapidly evolving frontier in international relations. Climate change is dramatically transforming the region, and increasing its geopolitical importance, with a number of players seeing new strategic and economic opportunities in the High North. We must ensure that the Arctic remains a zone of low tension and peaceful cooperation, where issues are solved through constructive dialogue. The European Union must be fully equipped to manage the new dynamics effectively, in line with our interests and values.⁹

1.1. Statement of problem

The words expressed by high representative Joseph Borrell implies that the European Commission yet again acknowledges the geopolitical importance of the Arctic, and thus it presents evidence that the EU might leave a softer approach for a harder one yet again. The EU had a “harder” approach in its first Arctic policy but left it for a softer one in order to satisfy

⁶ Hossain, Kamrul (2015) “EU Engagement in the Arctic: Do the Policy Responses from the Arctic States Recognise the EU as a Legitimate Stakeholder?” *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, Vol. 6, p. 94

⁷ Heininen, Lassi (2012) “State of the Arctic Strategies and Policies – A summary” *Arctic yearbook*, p. 42-43

⁸ Ebinger & Zambetakis (2009) p. 1231

⁹ COM (2020) 1318, *Press release – Arctic Policy: EU opens consultation on future approach*, p. 1

Arctic Council members. Likewise, the notion of cooperation in the Arctic will change as the climate deteriorates further, although the EU wants to act as a “force of good” rather than adhering to “realist interests”. Yet, a reason for increased EU interest in the Arctic is due to the natural resources that are confined there, which arguably adheres to a realist stance. As the Arctic Region is ever changing and with the background the words expressed by high representative Joseph Borrell in the 2020 communication, the purpose of this thesis is to answer the following question:

Does the European Commission’s perception of the Arctic predominantly correspond with Realism or Liberalism and in what way has that perception gradually changed?

1.2. Aim

Previous research mainly focusses on the legal competences, motives and alignment of EU policy with other Arctic nations, as well as its early development. Thus, the principal aim of this thesis is to address the lack of research on the gradual change of the European Commission’s perception of the Arctic with reference to the theories of Liberalism and Realism. By virtue of this, a research gap has been identified.¹⁰

The question of Arctic transformation will not only have severe environmental repercussions for Europe, but perhaps for the entire world as well. The increasing water temperatures have grave impacts on local, and adjacent flora and fauna. In the beginning of autumn in 2009, nearly 3,500 walrus assembled on the Alaskan north west coast as a result of reduced sea ice. Polar bears face extinction in less than 70 years due to melting sea-ice.¹¹ During the cold war, the arctic was a region of great strategic interest for the United States and the Soviet Union. The military escalation in the area was so severe that Mikhail Gorbachev, the last soviet president spoke of the necessity to keep the arctic region as “low tension, high north”.¹² In the 21st century, as of yet, the interests are mainly economic and surrounds the extraction of local resources that were long deemed unobtainable, but as the Norwegian foreign minister stated in 2005, “*In the future, the High North will be one of the most important strategic areas in the world.*”¹³

¹⁰ Esaiasson, P., Gilljam, M., Oscarsson, H., Towns, A., & Wängnerud, L. (2017). Metodpraktikan: konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad. (4., [rev.] uppl.). p. 32

¹¹ Ebinger & Zambetakis (2009) p. 1215

¹² Lanteigne, Marc (2019, 28th June)

¹³ Tamnes, Rolf., & Offerdal, Kristine (ED.) (2014) *Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic, Regional dynamics in a global world*. New York: Routledge p. 24

2. Previous research

2.1. The European Union in the Arctic

Kioivurova et. Al. evaluates the legal competences of the EU in the arctic region and concludes that the EU has strong legal competences to affect the Arctic Region as a whole, although membership in the Arctic council not necessarily is the most relevant option for the EU in terms of Arctic governance. In turn, the legal competences of the EU will only increase in scope and reach as the sea ice in the Arctic recedes. Despite its lack of a permanent observer role status in the Arctic council, direct shoreline and territorial assets, the EU should be seen as an important Arctic actor. Moreover Kioivuroa et al. reckons that the legal competences of the EU should be distinguished from its member states as many of EU policy areas are already firmly regulated at a supranational level and will continue to be so.¹⁴

Kamrul Hossain also examines whether the EU is a legitimate stakeholder in the Arctic by evaluating the policy responses of Arctic states in order to establish if these are plausible indicators for the EUs success in becoming a legitimate actor. Hossain maintains that even if the Arctic states do not recognise the EU as a legitimate stakeholder in the Arctic as a result of non-existing regional presence. They do not deny the European Union's importance, and they do not perceive it as inferior, compared to those that possess an observer status in the Arctic council. Moreover, he argues that despite the lack of a permanent observer status in the Arctic Council, the EU possesses legitimate rights due to international law as well as through engagement in regional affairs which implies that it constitutes a relevant powerful actor in the region.¹⁵

Kioivura et. Al. argues that the mistake many Arctic actors make; is the notion that individual states are the pivotal actors in Arctic governance, which according to them is increasingly not the case, as the principal decision-making process in terms of its member-states is taking place in EU institutions, increasingly in the hands of foremost the European Commission.¹⁶

Hossain maintains that the main reasons for the EUs increasing interest in the Arctic region is due to economic, environmental and political factors. The political factors constitute the protection of the indigenous peoples of the Artic, whilst the environmental and economic

¹⁴ Koivurova et. Al. (2011) p. 361, 369

¹⁵ Hossain (2015) p. 92, 104

¹⁶ Kioivura et. Al. (2011) p. 369

intertwine as the EU is highly dependent on fish, gas, oil and other natural resources in the region.¹⁷

Østhagen argues that in order to understand the EU as a foreign policy actor, the theory of “Normative power Europe” has to be applied. Thus, when the EU acts as an Arctic power, the political structure of the EU implies that it acts in a normative fashion. He also argues that the EU want to engage in foreign policy “as a force for good”, rather than following realist interest. Furthermore, The EUs intuitional setup for foreign policy relies on unanimity amongst its member states and as a result it is perceived as weak international player as it lacks means for enforcing policies.¹⁸

Kristine Offerdal tries to understand what role the European Union seeks in its Arctic policy and if it in turn challenges existing interests of Arctic states, with an emphasis on Norway-EU relations. She does this in order to evaluate the prospects of the EU becoming a major Arctic actor and to understand whether the region is becoming more including for non-arctic actors, or if it will continue to be dominated by the inner circle of the Arctic council. Offerdal states that her analysis is based on the notion that policy is event driven and that The European Union’s Arctic policy derives from the Russian flag planting in 2007. Offerdal furthermore argues that the factors that motivate and affect EU Arctic policy is a small number of stakeholders at state, institutional and individual levels, Arctic events and international events, as well as EU policy areas with adjacent Arctic policy implications.¹⁹

Offerdal explains that since the inception of an EU Arctic policy in 2007, the policy has altered its course from the security implications of climate change, to focusing on how the EU can gain legitimacy as an Arctic actor, which according to her has become the pivotal goal of the EU. However, the Arctic is not opening up to new actors, despite the evidence portraying otherwise. Regardless of Norway’s cooperative relations with the EU, due to a harder relationship with Russia and Canada, and as of their reluctance to cede the Union a permanent observer status in the Arctic council. This leads to the fact that gaining a permanent observer role will not be an easy task.²⁰ Østhagen argues that the lack of clarity and the complex internal decision-making process resulted in the questioning of its legitimacy by other Arctic nations. This together with

¹⁷ Hossain (2015) p. 93–94

¹⁸ Østhagen (2013) p. 73

¹⁹ Offerdal (2011) p. 862

²⁰ Offerdal (2011) p. 876–877

the seal ban issue resulted in that the EU could not gain a permanent observer status in the AC, and ultimately in the development of an EU Arctic policy at large as it has not convinced other Arctic Council members of its more moderated approach.²¹

In turn, Østhagen scrutinises the role of the European Union in the Arctic by establishing, why, how and to what end the European Union seek to become an Arctic actor. Østhagen identifies economic aspects by virtue of the eventual use of the north east and north west passage for maritime traffic. In relation to that 90% of all EU external trade is done by sea, and that 40% of the worlds shipping fleet sails under EU flag. He likewise identifies EU reliance on Arctic fish stock.²² These in turn, circumscribe three major dimensions; its geographic proximity, policy linkages (such as bilateral agreements concerning fish stock with Arctic nations), as well as the interests of the EU institutions. In which the Commission and the EEAS has been the most active in pursuing an Arctic policy with emphasis on sustainable policy. In turn, the institutional setup constitutes the “how”, the EU is developing its Arctic policy.²³

2.2. The Arctic region in the 21st century

Lassi Heininen examines the Arctic strategies of all Arctic states in order to identify similarities and differences between their different regional policies. He argues that the newly developed national Arctic state policies manifest the growing importance of the Arctic region and their northern parts respectively. He concludes that there is a clear growing interest in the region that has not found the same level of interest since the end of the cold war, as since the end of the 1990s, only Canada and Norway had a functioning arctic strategy.²⁴ The newly produced strategies by arctic and non-arctic states give evidence of a changing Arctic region and an increased interest amongst global and international actors towards the Arctic as well as the northern hemisphere. Heininen additionally determines that the current stability and peaceful cooperation of the Arctic Region circumscribes and relies on the policies of the respective nations. He also maintains that regional and international intuitions like the Arctic Council with its permanent members, and the United Nations UNCLOS also enables its adjacent nations to solve territorial disputes alongside international law. He does however realize that the position of the Arctic nations is changing and as such, so is also the idea of cooperation in the region as

²¹ Østhagen (2013) p. 80–81

²² Østhagen (2013) p. 74–75

²³ Østhagen (2013) p. 86

²⁴ Heininen (2012) p. 43

a result of a significant and rapid environmental, geo-economic and geopolitical change. As a result of this rapid change, the nations in the Arctic are more interested in exploiting the vast natural resources and to secure their strategic sovereignty over existing boundaries and maritime lanes. He argues that this can in turn be seen with the more prevalent and enhanced policies of the respective nations that elaborates their policies with national objectives and priority areas as they all want a firmer influence in regional affairs.²⁵

In a second article by Heininen, he portrays the post-cold war Arctic order and discusses what might be the special features of the region as a result of globalisation.²⁶ According to Heininen, the Arctic plays a key role in the global ecosystem, which due to its heavy impact on climate change, has made environmental protection a key concern amongst non-arctic, and Arctic actors. Climate change constituted a paradigm shift which resulted in the first field of functional cooperation amongst the eight Arctic states in the AC. Unlike during the cold war, the institutional stability of the AC has resulted in a high geopolitical stability free from military conflict. Despite stiffer relations between Russia and the west in recent years Heininen argues that Arctic stability has been exceptional.²⁷ This implies that the geopolitical stability of the Arctic is resilient. However, he concludes that the stability of the region is connected with the environment, which in turn is connected with geopolitical security.

In turn, Ebinger & Zambetakis argues that the arctic melt will result in economic, military, governmental and environmental challenges to the Arctic region. However, as long as the technological aspect of harnessing the resources is lacking, it is unlikely that a “race to the arctic” will occur. In other words, global climate change has placed the Arctic into the centre of geopolitics as of the region’s likely transformation from a mainly scientific interest area to an area with commercial, security and environmental interests. Thus, having severe implications for the existing legal and political system that govern the area and its adjacent territories.²⁸

Ebinger & Zambetakis affirms that despite that the present Arctic region functions alongside the boundaries confined in the international, regional legal and political system, namely the

²⁵ Heininen (2012) p. 43

²⁶ Heininen, Lassi (2018) “Arctic Geopolitics from classical to critical approach – importance of immaterial factors.” *Geography, Environment, Sustainability*, Vol. 11(1) p. 172

²⁷ Heininen (2018) p. 181

²⁸ Ebinger & Zambetakis (2009) p. 1231

UNCLOS, Arctic council and other bilateral agreements. There is no reason to believe that this spirit of cooperation will continue in the future. They concur that the same can be said about the EU: s present multilateral approach to Arctic governance.²⁹ The overall uncertainty aligns with five factors that as they change, will subsequently change how the region functions along the notion of multilateral cooperation. These constitute rising oil prices, ice-capable technology, that the Arctic community must be convinced that any extraction of resources will not result in the degradation of the Arctic environment, increased interest in the maritime shipping routes in the region and heightened commercial interests which in turn creates a favourable investment environment.³⁰

²⁹ Ebinger & Zambetakis (2009) p. 1231

³⁰ Ebinger & Zambetakis (2009) p. 1232

3. Theory

3.1. Liberalism

Realism and Liberalism are the two main theories of international politics and they can arguably be characterised along the lines of cooperation (liberalism) and confrontation (realism). Most of the great intellectual battles among scholars of international relations take place within or across these two theories.³¹ Liberalism is founded on the moral argument that an individual has the right to live a life in freedom, own property, and have access to free and fair elections. A political system that has unchecked power over its citizens limits these key notions and as a result, the key objective in liberal theory is to create institutions and states that can limit power over others.³² There are three core paradigms in Liberalism. Namely, that states are the main actors in international politics, secondly, that the internal structure of the state affects its behaviour and finally, liberals believe in the notion that power is not relevant in calculating or explaining the behaviour of states, as in an ideal world, power is irrelevant.³³

Liberal theorists believe that the internal arrangement of states (mainly democracy vs dictatorship) is preferable, as such there is a good and bad in international politics. Good states pursue cooperative policies instead of waging war. In direct opposition to “bad states” that create and cause conflict through force. As such, the key to world peace is to create as many “good” democratic states as possible. This theory stems from the democratic peace theory which claims that democratic states are less inclined to wage war against each other. In other words, more democratic states, more cooperation, less war and conflict.³⁴

Liberal theory also argues that a high level of economic interdependence among states makes them less likely to wage conflict against each other. The economic interdependence stems from the creation and maintenance of a liberal economic order, that is to say free trade and economic exchange. Such an order it is argued, generates more prosperous states. More prosperous states bolster peace as they are satisfied and do not possess the inclination to wage conflict against others. Moreover, war is often waged in order to gain wealth but if states are connected with

³¹ Mearsheimer, John., J. (2014) *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. Updated Edition. New York: Norton paperback. p. 14

³² McGlinchey, Stephen., Walters, Rosie. & Scheinflug, Christian (2017) *International Relations Theory*. Bristol: E-International relations publishing. P. 22

³³ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 15–16

³⁴ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 16

each other they are less likely to fight one another as it would damage the economy. Such an order makes states focus on accumulating wealth by trade, instead of war.³⁵

The final cornerstone of liberalism focuses on the maintenance and creation of international institutions. These in turn, enhance the prospects of cooperation amongst states and as a result, leads to a reduction in the likelihood of war. However, the institutions are not political entities with legislative power over nation states. Instead, they function as “guides” in the international political system by working through a set of rules that stipulate how states should act in the system. The institutions are in turn created by states that form the rules that prohibit or encourage certain edicts and as a result it is in a state’s best interest to maintain these institutions in order to push states towards peace.³⁶

3.2. Realism

Realism is the opposite of Liberalism in its notion of how international politics operate. Realist theory emphasises on the competitive and conflictual side of international relations, and realist scholars believe in the notion that the nation-state is the principal actor in international politics. Realists do recognize others such as organisations and powerful individuals, but they believe that their power is limited compared to that of states. The state in turn, functions as a unitary actor and especially so in times of war which lead the state to act as one.³⁷ As Kenneth Waltz exemplifies concerning the anarchic structure of the world:

With many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable among them, with each state judging its grievances and ambitions according to the dictates of its own reason or desire-conflict, sometimes leading to war, is bound to occur. To achieve a favourable outcome from such a conflict a state has to rely on its own devices, the relative efficiency of which must be a constant concern.³⁸

Realists are often considered to be pessimists compared to liberals; this is not due to the fact that they do not wish to create a peaceful world, but as a reason for their belief in that there is no escape from the great power politics of the world. The theory like Liberalism, is based on three core arguments. As previously stated, realists believe that the nation state is the principal actor in world politics, but it mainly focuses on the great powers of international politics as they

³⁵ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 16

³⁶ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 17

³⁷ McGlinchey et. Al. (2017) p. 15

³⁸ Waltz, Kenneth (2001) *Man, State and War*. 3rd ed. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 159

are the ones that shape the world and thus, creates the deadliest wars. This forms the first paradigm of Realist theory.³⁹

Secondly, realists believe in the notion that the behaviour of those powerful states is a reflection of their external environment, and not determined by internal structures. In other words, the international political system shapes foreign policy. Unlike liberal theorists, realists do not draw any distinctions between “good” or “bad” states as they believe that all great powers act the same, regardless of their political structure or culture, as they all seek to retrieve more power. As such, the only discrimination between states is that of great and relative world powers.⁴⁰

The final paradigm denotes in the belief that states calculate power and as such, this determines how they think and perhaps more importantly, act. This emanates in a belief that this creates a power struggle between states which sometimes lead to war, which is considered an acceptable instrument of statecraft. Even if states do cooperate, they do so because of an underlying power struggle and conflicting interests in the greater balance of power.⁴¹

3.3. Problematisation of Theoretical concepts

Previous research state that EU foreign policy is founded on the notion of being a normative power.⁴² That is to say being founded on a series of declarations, policies and treaties that follow five core rules. These are the rule of law, peace, liberty, democracy and human rights.⁴³ This in turn affects how the EU acts as a global actor and the subsequent objectives that are confined in its foreign policy. In other words, it “forces” the European Union to act “as a force of good” rather than adhering to realist interests.⁴⁴ Consequently, when the EU approaches the Arctic region, previous research state that it does so as a normative power. This implies that the European Union is deeply influenced by Liberal theory.

Concerning the Arctic, and foreign policy claiming to follow the notion of Liberal democracy, is more problematic than what it seems. This implies that there is a difference from political rhetoric and practise. The United states portrays itself as being a nation that spreads Liberal

³⁹ Mearsheimer (2014) p.17

⁴⁰ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 18

⁴¹ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 18

⁴² Østhagen (2013) p. 73

⁴³ Skripnikova (2018) p. 18

⁴⁴ Østhagen (2013) p. 73

democracy through its foreign policy, but arguably American foreign policy has traditionally been guided by the language of power and realist logic.⁴⁵

The European Union also asserts to follow the notion of “liberal democracy” in its foreign policy by adhering to a normative foundation. However, realist foreign policy is based on the notion that there is a constant struggle for a scarce number of resources. In turn, these resources can be anything from trading rights to agricultural land, and as such they are economic interests. As Kenneth Waltz observes, “economic and technological competition is often as keen as military competition.”⁴⁶ This makes the notion that the EU is a normative actor in the Arctic problematic, as previous research claim that the EU has economic interests in the arctic region that stems from the resources contained there.⁴⁷ Previous research also claim that initial EU concern stemmed from the geopolitical alterations of climate change,⁴⁸ which implies that there was a fear of a power struggle in the region. EU policy can also be somewhat ambivalent due to the internal structure of the Union and in in foreign policy, as Kissinger puts it, “It embraces universal ideas without the means to enforce them”.⁴⁹

3.4. Operationalisation of Theoretical concepts

The main research question: “*Does the European Commission’s perception of the Arctic predominantly correspond with Realism or Liberalism and in what way has that perception gradually changed?*”, has in accordance with the theories of Liberalism and Realism been operationalised into three research questions with reference to previous research and the thesis’s theoretical and methodological foundation. The operationalised research questions will be placed in an analysis table,⁵⁰ which in turn constitute the analysis tool for this thesis. The research questions constitute the different dimensions that will be used to answer the main research question. Below the research questions are the operationalised model types with background to the previously presented theoretical foundation of this thesis.

⁴⁵ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 25–26.

⁴⁶ Moravcsik, Andrew., & Legro, W., Jeffrey (1999) “Is anybody still a realist?” *International Security*, Vol. 24(2) p. 15-16

⁴⁷ Hossain (2015) p. 93-94

⁴⁸ Offerdal (2011) p. 875

⁴⁹ Kissinger (2015) p. 92

⁵⁰ See page 24.

1. How does the Arctic policy align itself according to the perception that the Arctic is characterised by multilateral or unilateral governance?

Liberalism assumes that states are the principal actors in world politics, whilst also recognising other stakeholders as important in world politics. Realist theory argues that only states are the principal actors in world politics as they perceive other stakeholders as inferior in terms of power, as the political system is anarchic.⁵¹ If the European Commission perceives only states as the principal actors in Arctic politics in the imminent analysis, it arguably aligns itself with a realist dimension. If the Commission perceives states as important, but not as superior to that of other stakeholders it is aligned with a liberal dimension in the analysis.

2. How does the Arctic policy align itself according to the perception that the Arctic is characterised by divergence or interdependence in economic interests?

Liberal theory assumes that there is a self-regulating system based on cooperation. This cooperation creates interdependence amongst states in the form of free trade and economic exchange which in turn creates prosperous states. Prosperous states are less inclined to wage war against each other and as such cooperation is desirable.⁵² Realist theory assumes that cooperation is only desirable if it is profitable for the state, in other words to enhance state power as the world's political system is characterised thereof. Furthermore, it assumes that there is a constant struggle over a scarce number of resources and thus it should seek to retrieve those resources.⁵³

As such, if the Commission perceives the economic interests in the Arctic region as a means for self-interest or as way increase power amongst the various Arctic stakeholders, it is more in accordance with Realism. If the Commission recognises that the economic interests in the region has equal benefits and include words such as cooperation and peace it perceives the Arctic region more in accordance with Liberalism.

⁵¹ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 16, 18

⁵² Mearsheimer (2014) p. 16,

⁵³ Moravcsik & Legro (1999) p. 16

3. How does the Arctic policy objectives align itself according to the perception that Arctic security is defined by anarchy or the rule of law?

Liberal theory strives for human rights, democracy and peaceful means in order to create a safe international political system. This is done through the maintenance or creation of an international system comprised of similar minded democratic states. These create a framework of laws maintained by states that wish to uphold them in order to reinforce peace.⁵⁴ Realist theory assumes that the international political system is anarchic and defined by power. Thus, all states seek to increase their power in order to ordain themselves above other competing states.⁵⁵ The European Commission perceives the Arctic region conferring with a realist stance if they recognise that there is a power struggle amongst Arctic and adjacent states over resources, or influence in the region. If the Commission perceives the Arctic as stable through the maintenance of regulation, institutions, and the rule of law, it is more in accordance with a liberal dimension.

⁵⁴ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 17

⁵⁵ Mearsheimer (2014) p. 18

4. Method & material

4.1. Research method

This thesis takes its foundation upon an idea analysis that focuses on model types. The method is systematic as its main purpose is to map the underlying structure of ideas confined in the material.⁵⁶ Ideas and ideologies are present in all forms social exchange and as a result they affect our actions. By virtue of this, they are the archetype for political analysis as they often form policy or recommendations thereof. Thus, in the case with this method the concept “idea” should not be mistaken as cognitive thoughts. The idea analysis is suitable for examining ideological change in policy documents, decrees and political debate⁵⁷ and as such it was chosen with its relevance to the main problem statement of this thesis. Namely, how the European Commission’s perception of the Arctic has changed over the years.

The method enables the researcher to map and understand underlying content in the chosen material by placing it alongside “model types”,⁵⁸ which in the case of this thesis is the political theories of Liberalism and Realism. The research method has no given format on how it should be executed and as such it gives the researcher liberty to create his own analysis tools, only the research question and the available material determines the analysis arrangement. The main objective for an idea analyst is therefore to produce a reliable account of the underlying ideas that generate the material. In turn, the process relies on the researcher’s ability to perform reductively. This implies that the researcher tests the preconditions and hypothesises repeatably in order to produce reliable results. Accordingly, the method puts dormant structures into the open by analysing it at an innate level and as consequence it provides a broader perspective. This is of interest of this thesis, as those structures are not evident at first glance.

4.2. Research Material

The secondary material that was used in this thesis is comprised of literature, previous research and academic journals retrieved from the Gothenburg University Library database and Google Scholar. The main scientific material was retrieved from *eur-lex.europa.eu* which is the official website of European Union law and policy documents. The research material that will be

⁵⁶ Esaiasson et. Al. (2017) p. 213

⁵⁷ Bergström, Kristina & Boréus, Göran (2018) *Textens mening och makt: Metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig Text- och Diskursanalys*. Vol. 4(1). Lund: Studentlitteratur AB. p. 138

⁵⁸ Bergström & Boréus (2018) p. 147–148

analysed are the three main European Union Arctic policy documents endorsed by the European Commission, namely;

1. (COM, 2008), 0763, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - The European Union and the arctic region. Released in on the 20th of November 2008.
2. (JOIN, 2012), 029, JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL - Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: progress since 2008 and next steps. Released on the 26th of June 2012.
3. (JOIN, 2016), 021, JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL - An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic. Released on the 27th of April 2016.

4.3. Case selection

The reason for why the European Commission's perception of the Arctic has been chosen for this thesis is threefold. The European Commission functions as the "legislative proposer" within the European Union, and it works as an agenda maker and policy advocate.⁵⁹ Furthermore, previous research also explains, considering the increased political importance of the Arctic, that policy is overall highly dependent on rhetoric, which in turn creates policy and thus constructs the geopolitical importance of the Arctic region. Depending on what one chose to call the Arctic, the policy will in turn reflect how it is perceived.⁶⁰ This implies that depending on how the European Commission perceives the Arctic, as will also the European Union's policy reflect that perception. That perception can also present evidence of how the Arctic region should be understood in that moment.

European Union Arctic policy has been gradually constructed and formed by a plethora of initiatives and policy documents, involving the entirety of European Union institutions. Due to limitations ordained for this bachelor's thesis, the main focus will be on the European Commission and not the European Union per se. Unfortunately, the perception as implied in the chosen policy documents can only be determined from its analysed contents, according to the chosen research method. As the European Commission has changed three times since Arctic

⁵⁹ Offerdal (2011) p. 864

⁶⁰ Heininen (2018) p. 172

policy inception, the results can merely indicate the change in perception and theoretical foundation as implied in official European Union Arctic policy, and not as the official standpoint of the entire European Union. Which is the reason for why the European Commission was chosen alongside limitations on the length and scope of this thesis.

As the EU has become more engaged in issues surrounding the Arctic region, so has also the European Parliament after the Lisbon treaty, as it has been supportive of the main themes presented in the Arctic policy of the European Union.⁶¹ However, the institutional set-up of the EU only grants the parliament a supervisory role and as the Commission functions as the “legislative proposer”, it has been the most active in creating the European Union’s Arctic policy and performs as an agenda setter for the EU. Thus, it frames the Commissions stance as scientifically interesting to analyse. The three policy documents that were chosen likewise comprises the main European Union Arctic policy, and its gradual progression.⁶²

4.4. Operationalisation of research method

In order to categorise the ideas in the empirical material, previously constructed model types were used. These are constructed and formed by the scholar who collects a number of typical features of a certain phenomenon based on previous research,⁶³ which in this case is previous research and literature on International Politics concerning the theories of Liberalism and Realism. However, the method does not rely on the notion that there is an “perfect” model type, merely the most prominent characteristics of the “ideal type” is suitable when comparing it with the research material. This also implies that it should not be regarded as a neutral representation as the types are a product of the researchers own prejudices and interests. In order to bypass this problem, the author of this thesis has operationalised Mearsheimer’s three respective paradigms of Liberalism and Realism as presented in the theory section. By virtue of that the first step in an ideal analysis is to define the ideas or ideologies that will be scrutinized.⁶⁴ These are most often found in previous research which in the case of this thesis has been literature regarding political theories. Subsequent of this, these have been classified after their most prominent characteristics, which have resulted in table 4.1.⁶⁵ The characteristics where further

⁶¹ Stang, Gerald (2016) EU Arctic policy in regional context, Directorate General for External policies: Policy Department. p. 10

⁶² Stang (2016) p. 7–8

⁶³ Bergström & Boréus (2018) p. 149

⁶⁴ Bergström och Boréus (2018) p. 149

⁶⁵ See page 24.

operationalised to function alongside European Union Arctic policy, and thus they have been constructed based on previous research, as well as theory.

The main purpose of this was to identify and isolate the main aspects of the phenomenon relevant for the research problem which is the change in perception regarding security, governance and participation. The next step in the analysis was to measure the ideal types alongside the empirical material in order to determine on what level the material aligns with the model types. The empirical material that aligned itself with the theoretical paradigms was subsequently analysed. The theories were consequently sorted into tables that gives a dimensional position of the analysed policy. The dimensional analysis can use model types and is suitable in determining gradual ideological change, or a “change in ideas”.⁶⁶ Which is why it was added to function beside the model types.

The dimensions were placed on an opposite axis, which are the three specified research questions that scrutinised the material and these resulted in table 4.2.⁶⁷ This was done in order to determine if the Commission had altered its perception of the Arctic as expressed in its policy. Table (4.1.) Functions as the analysis tool and table (4.2.) in order to answer previously produced research questions.

The three generated research questions enabled the writer of this thesis to analyse the three main policy areas of the European Union’s Arctic policy, namely: sustainable development, multilateral cooperation and climate change. In turn, depending on how European Commission presents the solutions for these policy areas, these will likewise reflect how the region is perceived. The main policy areas also contain areas such as fisheries, investment and proposals for cooperation in the Arctic region. The research questions also identify ideas that are not contained in the main policy areas, such as how the Arctic is described in the meta text. This has enabled the writer of this thesis to analyse the entirety of the Arctic policy documents and not only the policy areas. By using quotes from the three policy documents that align themselves with the model types and the dimensions, the reader can actively follow the gradual analysis of this thesis.

⁶⁶ Bergström och Boréus (2018) p. 153–154

⁶⁷ See page 24.

4.5. Validity & Reliability

Using model types brings structure to the analytical framework in an idea analysis as they present underlying patterns for the operator. The model type can subsequently be used to compare the research material, equally and against the model type. Furthermore, by applying dimensions, a progressive comparative analysis is achievable. Which is why the research method was chosen for this thesis.

There are however some risks concerning the validity and reliability of the results by using these methods. A common problem is that the using investigator forces the model types on the material and as a result the material is not allowed “to speak for itself”.⁶⁸ This most often depends on excessively constructed model types, and unfortunately this constitutes a problem if validity. There is also an issue of the researcher seeing model types in the material that might not be presented in the first place. In order to bypass this problem, the author of this thesis red the research material systematically and compared carefully chosen quotes with the previously constructed model types. These model types were based on theory from previous research, and they were subsequently operationalised twice to function alongside European Union Arctic policy with background to previous research on how Arctic politics functions. By operationalising the dimensions twice, it surpasses a research problem which often occurs in thesis’s, namely that of “blunt dimensions”. As such, the author of this thesis is under the firm belief that the conducted research has achieved validity.

Reliability issues surrounding qualitative thesis’s mainly surrounds the replicability of the study, which naturally is more problematic. In order to bypass any reliability issues, during the progression of the thesis, the author has striven for intersubjectivity by being as open to the research material as possible. As such, the author of this thesis has also tried to display all methodological choices and operationalisations, alongside quotes in the results section. Thus, any reader can follow my analysis as well as the methodological progression of this thesis with background to previous research and theory. By virtue of this, the author of this thesis is under the firm belief that the conducted research has achieved reliability.

⁶⁸ Bergström & Boréus (2018) p. 166

4.6. Analysis instruments based on model types.

Table, 4.1. Analysis tool based on model types.

| Model type | Perception of Arctic governance | Perception of Arctic Involvement | Perception of Arctic security |
|--------------------|--|---|--|
| Realism. | <p>Unilateral</p> <p>States are the principal actors in Arctic relations and as the Arctic region is anarchic. The European Union shall as such only maintain relations with the most powerful states unilaterally as cooperation is undesirable.</p> | <p>Divergence</p> <p>There are diverging interest amongst Arctic stakeholders and as such cooperation is not preferable. The European Union shall strive to secure interests and natural resources in a self-gaining manner.</p> | <p>Anarchy</p> <p>There is a power struggle amongst Arctic nations over the resources confined in the region. As the region is characterised by confrontation, cooperation is unobtainable, or only to maintain a regional balance of power. The European Union is concerned over the power struggle in the region.</p> |
| Liberalism. | <p>Multilateral</p> <p>The political system of the Arctic is characterised by states, institutions and other stakeholders. The European Union shall seek to cooperate with all relevant Arctic actors in its Arctic policy. As the multilateral approach is seen as positive for regional governance.</p> | <p>Interdependence</p> <p>There is a high level of interdependence between Arctic stakeholders. Mutual cooperation is perceived as positive by virtue of its peaceful impact on the Arctic region and for the beneficial impact of the resources confined in the region.</p> | <p>Rule of law</p> <p>The Arctic region is characterised by the rule of law and peaceful cooperation between Arctic nations and regional stakeholders, as well as institutions. The European Union shall seek to maintain the Arctic according to the rule of law.</p> |

Table, 4.2. Dimensional scale based on operationalised research questions.

| Dimensions | COM (2008) | COM (2012) | COM (2016) | Perception. |
|---|------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| Alignment with multilateral or unilateral governance. | | | | Predominantly: |
| Alignment with divergence or interdependence | | | | Predominantly: |
| Alignment with anarchy or with the rule of law. | | | | Predominantly: |

5. Results

5.1. Perception of Arctic governance

5.1.1. COM (2008)

In “*The European Union in the Arctic region*”, the European Commission is concerned over the negative impacts that climate change will have on the Arctic region. Indigenous peoples are perceived as being of major concern as “*About a third of the 4 million people living in the Arctic are indigenous. They are particularly vulnerable to the increasing pressures of climate change and globalisation.*”⁶⁹

In order to solve the problems surrounding the Arctic region, the European Commission wants to strengthen regional cooperation and it acknowledges regional, international and NGO’s as important stakeholders in Arctic governance. By reason of this, the European commission wants to strengthen, assess, promote, and coordinate cooperation with Arctic stakeholders to tackle environmental concerns and support Arctic indigenous peoples.

Rights of indigenous peoples are a thematic priority under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.⁷⁰

By focusing on the rights for individual groups in the Arctic, the European Commission arguably perceives the Arctic from a liberal point of view. The Commission also recognises minor stakeholders alongside states as important components in future Arctic cooperation, which also implies a liberal perspective on Arctic governance. However, a major concern for the European Commission is the lack of efficiency of existing governance in the region that can solve any disputes that might arise. As such, it perceives current Arctic governance as futile;

The main problems relating to Arctic governance include the fragmentation of the legal framework, the lack of effective instruments, the absence of an overall policy-setting process and gaps in participation, implementation and geographic scope.⁷¹

This perception is interesting, as it observes multilateral cooperation as the most appropriate way to uphold Arctic effective governance in the region.

⁶⁹ COM (2008), 0763, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. p. 4

⁷⁰ COM (2008) p. 4

⁷¹ COM (2008) p. 10

Yet, the Commission regards the current framework as fragmented and uncoordinated. In order to solve any future disputes and the fragmentation of legal framework, the Commission perceives strengthening of cooperative measures, and existing international framework as pivotal for ensuring that Arctic governance can function properly and as such “*The EU should work to uphold the further development of a cooperative Arctic governance system based on the UNCLOS*”.⁷²

An extensive international framework is already in place that also applies to the Arctic. The provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provide the basis for the settlement of disputes including delimitation. UNCLOS also contains rules for the use of living and non-living resources and the protection of the environment.⁷³

By adhering to the framework, the European Commission ensures that this would lead to security and stability, strict environmental management as well as a sustainable use of resources with open and equitable access in the Arctic.⁷⁴ It also recognises the Arctic council as successful in developing a regional identity and setting agendas for its member states. By reason of this, the European Commission wants to apply for a permanent observer status role in the Arctic Council and further develop cross-border cooperation and regional programmes with Arctic states.⁷⁵ The Commission further maintains that regional and global cooperation is the appropriate method for Arctic governance.

5.1.2. COM (2012)

In the 2012 “*Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: progress since 2008*”, The European Commission highlights the same issues regarding the Arctic region as in the 2008 communication.

As climate change and economic development accelerate in the Arctic region, the European Union should step up its engagement with its Arctic partners to jointly meet the challenge of safeguarding the environment while ensuring the sustainable development of the Arctic region.⁷⁶

⁷² COM (2008) p. 10

⁷³ COM (2008) p. 9

⁷⁴ COM (2008) p. 10

⁷⁵ COM (2008) p. 11

⁷⁶ JOIN (2012), 029, JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL - Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: progress since 2008 and next steps. p. 2

Like the in 2008, the European Commission wants to solve these issues by engaging more with Arctic partners and solve any challenges that affect the region in collaboration with these. These partners constitute Arctic states, indigenous peoples, NGO's and "other relevant stakeholders." It also maintains that the UNCLOS is an important legal framework for operative Arctic governance.

The EU intends to refine its developing Arctic policy in close cooperation with its Member States, the five non-EU Arctic states as well as local inhabitants, including indigenous peoples. Arctic states play a primary role in the region, both individually as well as in regional bodies. The EU acknowledges that an extensive legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and other relevant international instruments, and considers UNCLOS as a key basis for the management of the Arctic ocean. It also recognises the remarkable international cooperation already established between Arctic states and within the different Arctic regional stakeholders.⁷⁷

However, some gradual change can be observed from the 2008 communication and it mainly surrounds the efficiency of pre-existing Arctic governance. Unlike in 2008, the 2012 communication recognises "*the remarkable international cooperation already established between Arctic states*". The Commission has also changed their perception of the Arctic Council as "*The EU considers the Arctic Council to be the primary forum for international cooperation in the region*".⁷⁸ Concisely, the communication also stresses that;

The Commission and the High representative will moreover engage in a broad dialogue and consultation process with Arctic states, indigenous peoples and other relevant stakeholders. This will assist the EU in further refining its policy stance and ensure that the EU's future contribution to the Arctic has the support of regional stakeholders and is supportive of the common actions of Arctic states.⁷⁹

Unlike in 2008, the European Union wants to engage with more legitimacy as in the previous communication it wanted to "strengthen, assess and coordinate" with Arctic stakeholders. In the 2012 Communication, it wants to "*to step up its cooperation in Arctic matters in its bilateral dialogues with all its Arctic partners.*"⁸⁰ This presents a firmer liberal perspective on Arctic governance by virtue of the perception that existing intuitions, agreements and regional forums

⁷⁷ JOIN (2012) p. 10-11

⁷⁸ JOIN (2012) p. 11

⁷⁹ JOIN (2012) p. 5

⁸⁰ JOIN (2012) p. 11

function properly, and that the European Commission shall seek to further enhance such measures. Perhaps the most prominent case of this change in perception is the full recognition of the Arctic Council, in which all Arctic states participate alongside regional and global observers.

5.1.3. COM (2016)

In the 2016 Communication on “*An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic*”, the European Commission is concerned over the higher profile in international relations that the Arctic region has come to possess due to climate change. In order to solve these problems, the Commission identifies a multilateral approach to be the most appropriate.

While the Arctic states have the primary responsibility for tackling issues within their territories, many of the issues affecting the Arctic region that are discussed in this Joint Communication can be more effectively addressed through regional or multilateral cooperation.⁸¹

The Commission also highlights with whom and how this multilateral approach should be executed. Identical to previous communications, The European Commission is concerned over the protection and rights of Arctic indigenous peoples. As such, “*The EU will continue to engage with Arctic indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure that their views and rights are respected and promoted in the ongoing development of EU policies affecting the Arctic.*”⁸²

As in the 2008 and 2012 communications, the Commission also highlight the importance of the United Nations for promoting stability in the Arctic: “*In particular, the UN Convention in the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides a framework for managing the Arctic ocean, including the peaceful settlement of disputes.*”⁸³

The Commission also supports other UN initiatives such as the UN Economic Commission, UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Partners as well as the United Nations Environmental Programme. These initiatives are perceived as important participants in order to maintain Arctic cooperation, the rule of law and to reduce environmental concerns. The European Commission thus wants to take an active negotiating position in the UN regarding

⁸¹ JOIN,(2016), 021, JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL - An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic. p. 4

⁸² JOIN (2016) p. 15

⁸³ JOIN (2016) p. 14

Arctic matters.⁸⁴ However, as in the 2012 Communication, the importance of the maintenance and cooperation with the Arctic council is perceived as the pivotal instrument for cooperation in the region.

A number of Arctic cooperation forums have been set up in recent decades, the most important of which is the Arctic Council. The Arctic states have worked to foster peace and stability through cooperation and the application of the rule of law. Given the importance of the Arctic region and the significant changes underway there, it is important that the EU continues to cooperate with Arctic and non-Arctic partners to identify common positions and solutions on issues such as climate change, environmental protection and scientific research.⁸⁵

By virtue of this, the European Commission wants to “*continue its active participation in the Arctic council – the primary forum for international cooperation in the region by, for example, participating in and contributing to the work of relevant working groups, task forces and expert groups*”⁸⁶ As indicated in the 2008 and 2012 Communications, the European Commission is under the impression that a multilateral approach is the most appropriate in order to solve any Arctic governance issues. In turn, this should be done through the maintenance of international law and strengthened cooperation with all relevant Arctic stakeholders. These are according to the Commission the Arctic Council, its member states, indigenous peoples and other institutions with policies adjacent to Arctic issues such as the United Nations.

5.2. Perception of Arctic involvement

5.2.1. COM (2008)

In the 2008 communication, the Commission do not perceive that there are diverging interests amongst Arctic stakeholders over the resources in the region. However, regarding its involvement over the economic assets therein, the Commission acknowledges that these are of great benefit for the European Union as a whole. The economic areas of interest are divided into several policy areas such as the sustainable extraction of natural resources and fisheries.

The Arctic contains large untapped hydrocarbon reserves. Known Arctic offshore resources are located inside the Exclusive Economic Zone of Arctic states. Arctic resources could contribute to enhancing the EU’s security of supply concerning energy and raw materials in general. However,

⁸⁴ JOIN (2016) p. 14

⁸⁵ JOIN (2016) p. 13

⁸⁶ JOIN (2016) p. 14

exploitation will be slow since it presents great challenges and entails high costs due to harsh conditions and multiple environmental risks.⁸⁷

The Commission also state that *“Support for the exploitation of Arctic hydrocarbon resources should be provided in full respect of strict environmental standards considering the particular vulnerability of the Arctic.”*⁸⁸ It likewise maintain that it should *“Work to strengthen the foundations for long-term cooperation, particularly with Norway and the Russian Federation, facilitating the sustainable and environmentally friendly exploration, extraction and transportation of Arctic hydrocarbon resources.”* These statements emancipate an interesting perception from the European Commission. It does want to cooperate and promote the sustainable extraction of resources. However, “support” is an interesting choice of words. Similarly, is the notion of bilateral cooperation with Russia and Norway as these are important partners for the European Union regarding gas and oil. It implies that the Commission wants to engage in these matters in a self-gaining manner. The same can be seen regarding fisheries as the Commission is concerned over what the eventual migration of fish towards Arctic waters would result in, as the European Union is highly dependent on Arctic fish stock.

New areas may become attractive for fishing with increased access due to reduced sea ice coverage. For some of the Arctic high seas waters there is not yet an international conversation or a management regime in place. This might lead to unregulated fisheries.⁸⁹

As with Arctic governance, the European Commission wants to solve this eventual predicament through multilateral cooperation within the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and Arctic states, as well as to maintain fishing at a sustainable level whilst respecting the rights of local coastal communities.⁹⁰

Put in place a regulatory framework for the part of the Arctic high seas not yet covered by an international conversation and management regime before new fishing opportunities arise. This will prevent fisheries developing in a regulatory vacuum.

As such it is concerned over the regular supply of fish stock in a supervisory vacuum. Intuitively, it is concerned over sustainable fishing, but not as if it were a problem for all Arctic and adjacent nations, but as a problem of supply for the European Union itself. The European

⁸⁷ COM (2008) p. 6

⁸⁸ COM (2008) p. 7

⁸⁹ COM (2008) p. 7

⁹⁰ COM (2008) p. 7

Commission's proposals for further investments in research likewise profess a perception that these should be done in a self-gaining manner.

The European Community should maintain the Arctic as a priority area for research to close knowledge gaps and assess future anthropogenic impacts, especially in the area of climate change. Moreover, it should strengthen international cooperation and interoperability and contribute to designing concrete steps for prevention, mitigation and adaptation.⁹¹

The perception as implied in this statement, acknowledges that research should be conducted within the field of climate change. However, at the same time the Commission proposes the following suggestions in its 2008 communication; *"Promote further research and development in offshore technology and infrastructures. Build on experience accumulated in European Industry offshore oil and gas exploitation. Facilitate further research and innovation as emphasis shifts to even harsher climates and deeper waters."*⁹² As well as that; *"The EU edge in technologies for sustainable exploitation of resources in polar conditions should be maintained."*⁹³

As such, The European Union should ensure the protection of the Arctic environment, whilst at the same time conduct research within areas that could potentially harm it. As with the extraction of resources, research and fisheries, the Commission has the perception that it should strengthen its own capacity, with respect to environmental standards. *"It is in the EU's interests to explore and improve conditions for gradually introducing Arctic commercial navigation, while promoting stricter safety and environmental standards as well as avoiding detrimental effects."*⁹⁴ It also wants to *"With the applicable rules of competition law, maintain the competitive lead of European shipyards in developing technology required for Arctic conditions. The potential to provide specially designed, environment-friendly ships, including icebreakers, is an important asset for the future."*⁹⁵

These implications make the Commission's perception regarding involvement in the Arctic region interesting as the focus have changed from multilateral cooperation and the benefit of

⁹¹ COM (2008) p. 6

⁹² COM (2008) p. 7

⁹³ COM (2008) p. 8

⁹⁴ COM (2008) p. 8

⁹⁵ COM (2008) p. 8

all in terms of governance, to a more realist point of view when it concerns the economic assets confined in the region.

5.2.2. COM (2012)

As in the 2008 Communication, The European Commission do not perceive that there are any diverging interests over Arctic resources. However, unlike in 2008, the point of view has changed regarding how the extraction and procurement of these resources should proceed as more emphasis has been placed on cooperation. This implies that the Commission wants to make sure that its interests are aligned with all Arctic stakeholders, namely Arctic states as well as local communities. This change in perception applies to all areas with professed economic interests such as fisheries, the extraction of resources and research.

The changing Arctic landscape is now opening up to new transport lanes and the exploitation of both natural and mineral resources. While this will be of benefit for the regional and global economy, it will also have repercussions on the Arctic's fragile environment if not managed with utmost care. New technology and an extensive knowledge base will be required to ensure that economic opportunities do not come at the expense of the highest environmental standards and the preservation of the unique Arctic environment.⁹⁶

In the 2008 Communication, more emphasis was placed on the benefit of the European Union and less on the environmental repercussions of an arctic melt. In the 2012 communication however, emphasis is placed on mutual benefit, regional cooperation and sustainable execution regarding the extraction of natural resources. The professed perception that any extraction of Arctic assets should and will be done in a mutually benefiting manner implies that the Commission perceives that interdependence is the appropriate method for future economic matters and as such it aligns with a liberal model type. This is evident through its proposals for its future engagement;

The Arctic states and the EU have a shared interest in ensuring that the Arctic's natural resources both on land, at sea, and at or below the seabed are utilised in a sustainable manner that does not compromise the Arctic environment and benefits local communities.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ JOIN (2012) p. 2-3

⁹⁷ JOIN (2012) p. 9

In view of increasing mining and oil extraction activities in the Arctic region, the EU will work with Arctic partners and the private sector to develop environmentally friendly, low-risk technologies that could be used by extractive industries.⁹⁸

The same change in perception can be seen regarding fisheries, which was professed as being of great concern for the European Union in the 2008 communication. Especially, concerns over the lack of a functioning framework that would ensure fair and transparent management of fisheries in case of a northward migration of fish-stock was acknowledged. In the 2012 Communication, the Commission have no such concerns.

One third of the fish caught in the Arctic are sold on the European market. Studies show that this figure could increase as fish stocks may move north as a result of warming seas. The EU is keen to ensure good cooperation with Arctic states in the sustainable management of marine biological resources.⁹⁹

Conclusively, this is also the case regarding the allocation of information, and the procurement and funding for research. In the 2008, Communication, weight was placed on the self-benefit of research regarding the Arctic as it would ensure European Union competitiveness. In the 2012 Communication the Commission perceives scientific interdependence as something valuable. This is merely a reflection of a changed perception of how economic issues should be solved in the Arctic, as the Commission now regards interdependence as the appropriate method for solving economic dilemmas. This favours a policy which is more liberal in its theoretical stance concerning these issues.

The EU will therefore seek broad cooperation with states that are active in the field of multidisciplinary Arctic research and in establishing research infrastructures. The alignment of Arctic research programmes will be an important contribution to knowledge and will increase the efficiency of research programmes while maximising their impact.¹⁰⁰

5.2.3. COM (2016)

In the 2016 Communication on “*An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic*”, The European Commission does not perceive that there are diverging interests over Arctic

⁹⁸ JOIN (2012) p. 9

⁹⁹ JOIN (2012) p. 10

¹⁰⁰ JOIN (2012) p. 7

resources. However, a gradual change in perception can be observed yet again. Predominantly in the area of research, funding, and development as well as when it concerns fisheries.

The EU should welcome the recent declaration signed by five Arctic coastal states on Arctic fisheries and the need to obtain more information on ecosystems in the Arctic ocean before opening up this region to commercial fishing. However, as the area concerned is beyond national jurisdiction, it will be necessary for all interested countries, not only the coastal states, to work together to establish the appropriate international measures. This framework should in due course include a new Regional Fisheries Management Organisation or Arrangement, combined with a new Regional Sea Convention, to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of resources in the Arctic high seas.¹⁰¹

This statement presents a noteworthy opinion. The existing regional framework has produced regulation regarding Arctic fisheries and the protection of local ecosystems. However, the Commission is under the opinion that it is an issue that should be solved multilaterally, and not bilaterally amongst Arctic coastal states. As no European Union member state has a direct shoreline with regional fishing waters, *“The European Commission believes that such a framework can only be established in an open and inclusive manner and welcomes the broadening of the negotiations to involve major fishing nations”*¹⁰² By suggesting this approach, The European Commission maintains the interests of the European Union and its member states, whilst at the same time suggesting that cooperation in the matter should be extended in order to have efficient regulation in place.

Likewise, the change in perception regarding the extraction of natural resources is due to a more professed weight on the positive return of these in the “European Arctic region.”

The European part of the Arctic also has significant potential to support growth in the rest of Europe. However, as the EU does not currently have a complete north-south traffic connection, it could explore the merits of strengthening links to the Arctic through trans-European networks, for example from Finland to Norway, providing access to the Arctic ocean.¹⁰³

Similarly, more emphasis on the European Arctic region can also be seen regarding future investment in the region.

¹⁰¹ JOIN (2016) p. 16

¹⁰² JOIN (2016) p. 16

¹⁰³ JOIN (2015) p. 9

Consultations by the Commission and the European External Action Service suggest that the European Arctic is suffering from underinvestment. Recognising the need to work closely with national, regional and local authorities in the European Arctic, the Commission will set up a European Arctic stakeholder forum with the aim of enhancing collaboration and coordination between different EU funding programmes.¹⁰⁴

This change in perception places more emphasis on the European Arctic region and less on the area's entire extent. As such, future development and investment is arguably regarded as beneficial in a self-gaining manner for the European Union. By virtue of this, the Commission regards economic assets as way to strengthen its economic capacity and arguably its power. This provides evidence that the Commission yet again perceives the Arctic region from a more realist point of view. Similar thoughts can be seen regarding research;

The EU should support the deployment of innovative technologies in the Arctic. These technologies could be applied to a wide range of activities such as the development of advanced materials capable of working in extreme conditions in the Arctic winter that could stimulate investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions. Such technologies have the potential to bring broad social and economic benefits within and beyond the Arctic. In addition to Horizon 2020, the ESIF programmes provide funding for research and innovation activities in the European part of the Arctic.¹⁰⁵

While the Commission wants to engage sustainably in its extraction of resources, as these could encourage sustainable solutions, it wants to further develop these to function in the extreme weather conditions. As it has professed in the earlier communications, the harsh local environment has made the extraction of local assets difficult and thus it wants to strengthen its capacity in this field. Which arguably aligns with a realist model type.

¹⁰⁴ JOIN (2016) p. 11

¹⁰⁵ JOIN (2016) p. 10

5.3. Perception of Arctic security

5.3.1. COM (2008)

In the 2008 Communication “*The European Union in the Arctic region*”, The European Commission is concerned over the implications that climate change will have on the region and it perceives any severe alterations as a threat to European, as well as international stability. The geopolitical implications of climate change are perceived as a reason for creating the first steps for an Arctic policy of the European Union.

In view of the role of climate change as a “threat” multiplier”, the Commission and the high representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy have pointed out that environmental changes are altering the geo-strategic dynamics of the Arctic with potential consequences for international stability and European Security interests calling for the development of an EU Arctic policy. On the whole, Arctic challenges and opportunities will have significant repercussions on the life of European citizens for generations to come. It is imperative for the European Union to address them in a coordinated and systematic manner, in cooperation with Arctic states, territories and other stakeholders.¹⁰⁶

While the European Commission is professing a will to solve these Arctic challenges with regional and international stakeholders, thus recognising the importance of cooperation, it is however concerned with existing Arctic governance.

There is no specific treaty regime for the Arctic. No country or group of countries have sovereignty over the North Pole or the Arctic Ocean around it. There are several maritime borders where Arctic coastal states have not agreed upon the delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zones. Submissions to the UN Commission on the limits of the Continental Shelf may result in overlapping claims. Moreover, there are different interpretations of the conditions for passage of ships in some Arctic waters, especially in the Northwest Passage.¹⁰⁷

These statements indicate that the European Commission, while not explicitly claiming that there are security dilemmas in the Arctic region, perceives its stability as lacking and as such not according to the rule of law. Despite that the communication professes an intention and a will to strengthen regional cooperation, it is due to somewhat “anarchic” nature of present Arctic politics. Thus, that perception implies that the Commission **has** to address these issues with all relevant Arctic stakeholders.

¹⁰⁶ COM(2008) p. 2-3

¹⁰⁷ COM(2008) p. 9

5.3.2. COM (2012)

In the 2012 Communication a change in perception can be observed. The security of the Arctic is perceived as efficient and according to existing international and regional framework. While the Communication does not provide an analysis over the security implications of climate change in the same amount as the 2008 Communication. It provides some insight;

The Arctic is of growing strategic importance. It is an example of successful international cooperation contributing to peace and security in the region. The recent conclusion of the treaty between the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean is a positive example of such cooperation. Arctic states co-operate on the basis of existing international legal order, notably the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas. The Arctic Council is emerging as the leading regional body, in which all Arctic states, as well as indigenous peoples, are represented.¹⁰⁸

While the region is of growing strategic importance, the European Commission perceives that any concerns over the security implications of climate change (as expressed in the 2008 Communication) can be solved through global and regional instances such as the UNCLOS, Arctic Council and through bilateral cooperation. Thus, the European Commission perceives that Arctic security functions according to the notion of rule of law based on the model type in the 2012 communication.

5.3.3. COM (2016)

The 2016 Communication expresses a perception of concern over the implications of climate change and what a future scenario might bring for local communities.

While the changes affecting the Arctic present opportunities for local communities, they also have the potential to increase tensions in the region, for example through competition for resources and increasing economic activity. International legal frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, also cover the Arctic. It is now more important than ever to ensure that the Arctic remains a zone of peace, prosperity and constructive international cooperation.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ JOIN (2012) p. 3

¹⁰⁹ JOIN (2016) p. 4

While it suggests that these issues can be solved through multilateral governance, predominantly with the use the regulation confined within the UNCLOS, a change in perception can be observed.

The challenges affecting the Arctic, and the solutions required to address them, require a joined-up response at regional and international level. Wider geopolitical dynamics may add further complexity to the changes affecting the region. The EU has a strong interest in seeing that the Arctic remains a zone of constructive international cooperation where complex issues are addressed through negotiated solutions, and where common platforms can be established in response to emerging risks.¹¹⁰

The Commissions perception of Arctic security in the 2016 communication suggest that it yet again is concerned over how the region might function in the near future. Unlike the 2012 Communication where these concerns where not expressed. The results indicate that the Arctic yet again is seen as somewhat anarchic, which ordains the 2016 Arctic policy with a realist perspective on Arctic security. It is also noteworthy that the Commission wants to ensure that effective stewardship of the Arctic ocean is in place, which arguably can be seen as a criticism of the Arctic council since the 2012 communication expressed that is “*emerging as the leading regional body, in which all Arctic states, as well as indigenous peoples are represented.*”¹¹¹

It is also important to ensure that appropriate measures are in place for effective stewardship of the Arctic ocean to ensure environmental protection, peaceful cooperation and dispute settlement, respect for international law and the sustainable use of marine resources. Maritime security is also of increasing importance.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ JOIN (2016) p. 13

¹¹¹ JOIN (2012) p. 3

¹¹² JOIN (2016) p. 14

6. Analysis

How does the Arctic policy align itself according to the perception that the Arctic is characterised by multilateral or unilateral governance?

The first research question examined the perception of Arctic governance and the results indicate that the European Commission perceives a multilateral approach to be the most appropriate in Arctic governance issues. It proposes that cooperation should be undertaken with all relevant Arctic stakeholders, which constitute the United Nations and its various instances, Arctic states, local and indigenous populations as well as the Arctic council. The latter was first recognised in the 2012 Communication, which presents evidence that Offerdals theory of the European Union altering its stance towards the Arctic to gain a permanent observer seat in the Arctic Council is correct.¹¹³ Ebinger & Zambetakis suggested that as the Arctic region is getting warmer, likewise will the European Union's stance on its multilateral approach to the area change.¹¹⁴ However, there are not any indications that this perception has changed in the analysed material. The results predominantly align itself with Heininen's research that suggests that Arctic cooperation is unique and resilient.¹¹⁵

Regarding its position with the model types, and the gradual change of the Arctic policy, it follows a liberal perspective on Arctic governance. The European Commission is concerned over the implications of climate change, but it wants to solve these issues multilaterally and it maintains that perception progressively. Thus, it is also placed on the liberal perspective on the dimensional scale.

How does the Arctic policy align itself according to the perception that the Arctic is characterised by divergence or interdependence in economic interests?

The second research question focused on the perception of Arctic economic interests. While the European Commission do not perceive that there are any diverging interests amongst Arctic stakeholders over the natural resources that are confined in the region, the results present that it is interested in securing these in a self-gaining manner in the 2008 and 2016 communications. Arctic fish stock and natural assets are perceived as beneficial to the European Union and as

¹¹³ Offerdal (2011) p. 862

¹¹⁴ Heininen (2018) p. 181

¹¹⁵ Ebinger & Zambetakis (2009) p. 1232

such it should seek to maintain these interests. Hossain¹¹⁶ and Østhagen¹¹⁷ suggested that a major reason for the European Arctic policy in the first place was the interest Arctic recourses, and this perception is evident in all three of the Arctic policies respectively. The only difference is that it should either procure them in a self-benefiting manner, or for the benefit of all. It is likewise noteworthy that the European Commission wants to enhance its technological capabilities through investment in the 2008, and 2016 Communications. By virtue of the lacking technological capabilities that can function in the harsh climate. Ebinger and Zambetakis suggests, that the extraction of natural resources in the Arctic, and any subsequent race for those resources rely on the capacity of technological capabilities. In turn, when these are existent, the extraction and as subsequent “race for the Arctic” could be a possibility.¹¹⁸

The 2012 communication on the other hand places emphasis on the mutual benefit of any Arctic recourses and thus it arguably strives for economic interdependence between all Arctic stakeholders. This makes the perception of any economic interests in the Arctic ambivalent and as such the dimensional progression somewhat uncoordinated. It can however be argued that the European Commission perceives Arctic assets from a predominantly realist perspective according to the model types.

How does the Arctic policy objectives align itself according to the perception that Arctic security is defined by anarchy or the rule of law?

The final research question analysed how the European Commission perceives the Arctic region with reference to security issues. Initially, the Commission perceived Arctic change as a threat to European as well as to International security and these concerns formed the foundation of the European Union’s Arctic policy. The 2012 communication acknowledges that the region is growing in strategic importance, but it maintains the perspective that it functions properly along existing framework and cooperation carried out by the Arctic Council and its various members. The 2016 communication marks a return to the impression that the geopolitical implications of climate change and its repercussions stresses regional cooperation as well as the establishment of effective stewardship for the region.

¹¹⁶ Hossain (2015) p. 93

¹¹⁷ Østhagen (2013) p. 75

¹¹⁸ Ebinger & Zambetakis (2009) p. 1231–1232

As was the case with the opinion of Arctic economic interests, the perception of Arctic security has changed in a similar manner. While the 2008 and 2016 policies perceive the region as anarchic, and as such according to a realist model type, the 2012 communication perceives the Arctic region in line the rule of law paradigm. This further provides evidence that Offerdal was right in her analysis, as she claims that the European Union changed its Arctic policy in order to gain a permanent observer status in the Arctic council, as some Arctic Council nations regarded the 2008 communication as problematic.¹¹⁹ Likewise, Hossain explains that as of yet the European Union has not been granted a permanent observer status in the Arctic Council. It acts as an “observer in principle” and this could be the reason for why it changed its perception as implied in its policy yet again.¹²⁰ It could also be due to the importance of rhetoric’s when constructing policy, as Heininen state that depending on what one chose to call the region, so will also its adjacent policy reflect that stance.¹²¹

Analysis table over the gradual dimensional change in perception.

Table 4.2.

| Dimensions | COM (2008) (1) | COM (2012) (2) | COM (2016) (3) | Perception. |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Alignment with multilateral or unilateral governance. | Multilateral (Liberalism) | Multilateral (Liberalism) | Multilateral (Liberalism) | (1)Liberalism (2)Liberalism (3)Liberalism |
| Alignment with divergence or interdependence | Divergence (Realism) | Interdependence (Liberalism) | Divergence (Realism) | (1)Realism- (2)Liberalism- (3)Realism |
| Alignment with anarchy or with the rule of law. | Anarchy (Realism) | Rule of Law (Liberalism) | Anarchy (Realism) | (1)Realism (2)Liberalism (3)Realism |

¹¹⁹ Offerdal (2011) p. 869

¹²⁰ Hossain (2015) p. 90

¹²¹ Heininen (2018) p. 172

7. Conclusion

The main research question wanted to resolve if the European Commission perception of the Arctic predominantly corresponds with Liberalism or Realism, and in what way this perception had changed. A model type analysis with dimensions, alongside the theories of Liberalism and Realism was operationalised in order to answer the research question. The three main Arctic policies of the European Union were chosen and its three main policy areas, as well as their overall description of the Arctic was analysed.

The results indicate that European Arctic policy has been ambivalent during its progression, and as such a firm point of opinion can not be established. However, it is predominantly liberal in its perception of the Arctic region, mainly regarding the notion of multilateral cooperation. In opposition, it is predominantly “realist” when it observes the Arctic region, as well as when it concerns its economic assets. Regarding change, it has only been observed when it concerns Arctic security and issues regarding these assets. That gradual change can be similarly observed in both areas during the same time period. The most obvious change was in the 2012 communication when it stressed that economic interdependence was seen as something beneficial, and the rule of law as functioning.

It proves that whilst the European Union like Østhagen suggests,¹²² functions on a normative foundation, it has realist perspectives when it perceives the Arctic region from the exterior. Further research can scrutinize if there is a difference in rhetoric’s and practice regarding European Union foreign policy as a whole. Further research can also scrutinise if the ever-increasing climate in the Arctic region have resulted in more tensions between Arctic stakeholders. Perhaps more importantly, when the next European Arctic policy is published, based on the author of this thesis’s research, determine in which direction that policy ordains itself and what that might say about the changing nature of Arctic geopolitics.

¹²² Østhagen (2013) p. 73

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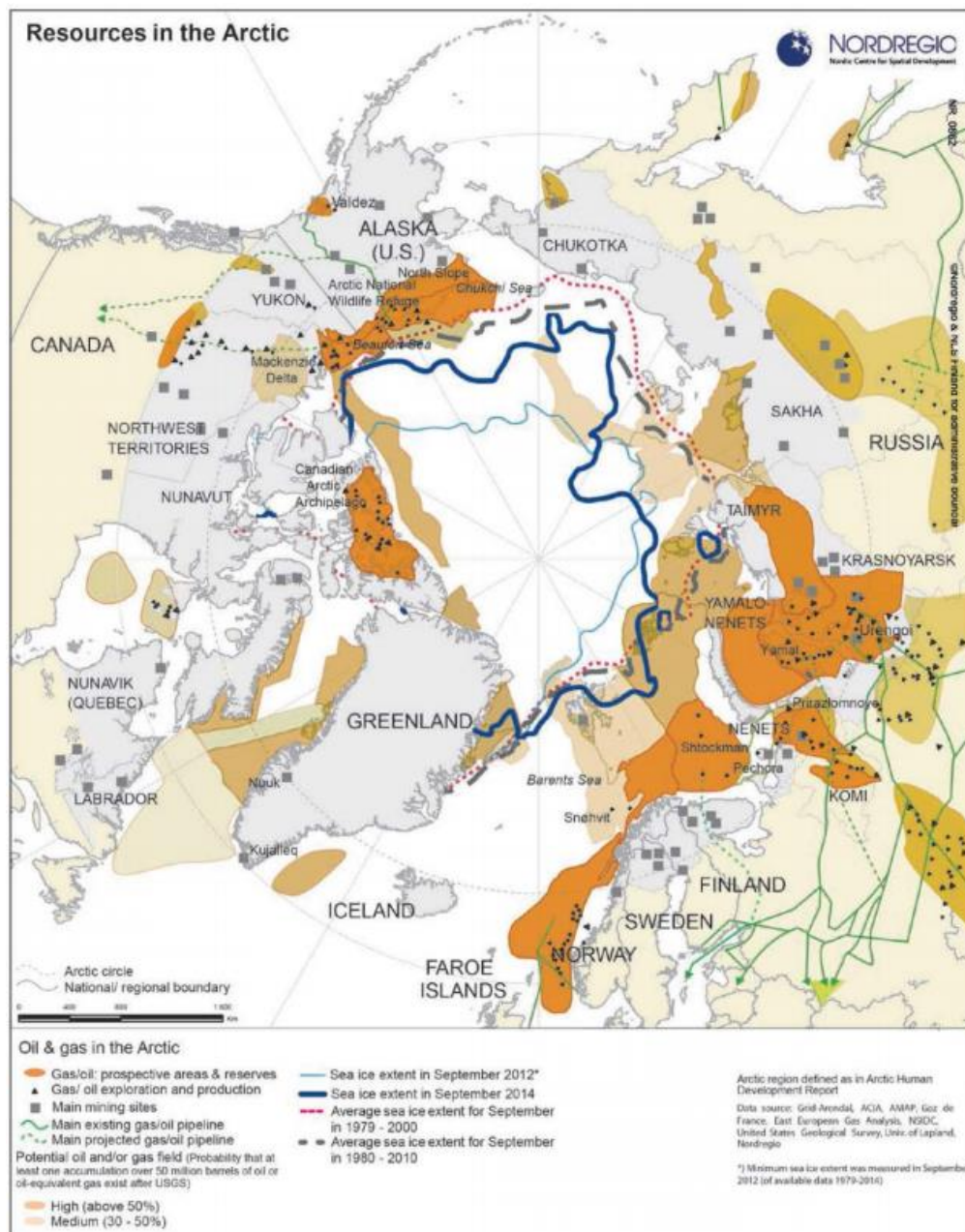
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Appendix 1.

Map over the Arctic region and its resources.¹²³



¹²³ Stang (2016) p. 26

Appendix 2.

The gradual progression of the European Arctic policy.¹²⁴

1. European Parliament resolution, 9th of October 2008 - ‘Arctic governance’
2. Commission communication, 20th of November 2008 - ‘The EU and the Arctic region’
3. Council of the European Union, 8th of December 2008 - Arctic conclusions
4. Council of the European Union, 8th of December 2009 - Arctic conclusions
5. European Parliament resolution, 20th of January 2011 - ‘A Sustainable EU policy for the High North’
6. EEAS/Commission joint communication 26th of June 2012, with three documents:
 - ‘Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: progress since 2008 and next steps’ (Official policy)
 - ‘The inventory of activities in the framework of developing a European Union Arctic Policy’ (Working paper)
 - ‘Space and the Arctic’ (Working paper)
7. European Parliament resolution, 12th of March 2014 - ‘An EU strategy for the Arctic’
8. Council of the European Union, 12th of May 2014 - Arctic conclusions on ‘developing an EU policy towards the Arctic’.
9. EEAS/Commission joint communication 27 April 2016 ‘An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic’
10. Council of the European Union, 20th of June 2016 - Arctic conclusions in response to the new Joint Communication

¹²⁴ Stang (2016) p. 34